

21.

MESSAGE 17

CLEANSING OF A PERSON HEALED OF *TSARAATH*

Leviticus 14:1-32

Introduction

This MESSAGE deals with a person who was healed of *tsaraath*. It is obvious from this MESSAGE that cleansing was not for the purpose of healing. Cleansing was not performed until after the person already had been healed of the disease (v. 3). This fact is further evidence that the ceremonies of clean and unclean were not for medical purposes. Their purpose was to teach moral lessons. Since *tsaraath* symbolized sin, healing of *tsaraath* symbolized removing sin from the person's life by forgiveness. Then cleansing symbolized the removal of the effects of sin from the believer's life. The cleansing ceremonies did not represent the removal of the sin itself. Removing sin from a person was and is accomplished only by the grace of God. It comes from faith alone, not from any amount of works or any amount of time. The cleansing ceremonies represented removing the ugly effects sin had left on the forgiven sinner's life. Forgiveness of sin came immediately on entering into covenant with Jehovah, but overcoming the effects of sin took time, personal effort, and God's power.

Cleansing ceremonies were required after a person became unclean by contact with an unclean creatures (see comments on Lev. 11:25-28,32,40 in MESSAGE 14). They were also required after a woman recuperated from giving birth to a child (see comments on Lev. 12:2-8 in MESSAGE 15). They were also required after a person was healed from *tsaraath*. The ceremonies for cleansing after a person was healed of *tsaraath* were more elaborate, and they help us to understand more fully the significance of cleansing.

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Interpretation

CHAPTER 14

Introductory note (14:1)

Verse 1. **And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying.**

This verse introduces a new MESSAGE from Jehovah. It was addressed only to Moses, rather than to Moses and Aaron. It probably was delivered on the fifth day of the seven days of fillings that were part of the hallowing ceremonies for Aaron and his sons (see comments on Lev. 1:1 in MESSAGE 14 and on Lev. 12:1 in MESSAGE 15).

- a. The ceremonies outside and inside the camp (14:2-9)

- (1) Preparation for the ceremonies (14:2-4)

Verses 2-3. **2 This is the law for the person afflicted with *tsaraath* in the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest.**

3 And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine [him]. And [if] the striking of *tsaraath* is healed in the person afflicted with *tsaraath*,

4 Then the priest shall command to take to the person who has been healed, two living clean birds and cedar wood and scarlet cochineal [yarn] and hyssop.

The procedures to follow to cleanse a person after he had been healed of *tsaraath* are outlined in this MESSAGE. The first step was to take him to the priest, but not inside the camp or to The Tabernacle. Since he could not enter the camp because he had not yet been cleansed (see comments on Lev. 13:46 in MESSAGE 16), the priest was to go outside the camp and the person was to be taken to him there. The priest was to examine him to determine if he truly had been healed.

If the priest determined that he had been healed, the person was free to conduct cleansing

ceremonies so he could return to a normal life. The priest was to give instructions concerning the objects that needed to be gathered for the cleansing ceremonies. No doubt, the affected person was to present those objects in the ceremonies, but others were to secure them for him because he could not go among people to secure them for himself. He was to provide “two living clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet cochineal yarn, and ‘hyssop.’” No specifications are given as to what kind of birds were to be secured. Evidently the choice of birds was left to the discretion of the person securing them as long as they were alive and ceremonially clean, according to the regulations in Leviticus 11:13-24 (see comments on those verses in MESSAGE 14). “Cedar wood” evidently meant a small piece of wood from a cedar tree. “Scarlet cochineal [yarn]” seems to have meant a small length of yarn or thread dyed scarlet by using dyes made from a cochineal worm. “Hyssop” meant a small branch from the “hyssop” bush, though the bush called by that name today is likely not the plant referred to in the Bible. *Ezov* was the Hebrew name for the plant, and it is not definitely known what plant that name referred to. Quite a number of guesses have been made, but no solid information exists. 1 Kings 4:33 seems to indicate that it was a vine, because that verse calls it, “*ezov* that springs out of the walls.” The plant called “hyssop” today is not a vine. The Israelites used *ezov* to smear blood on their doorposts to save them from death during the tenth plague in Egypt, so the plant grew in such a way that it could hold and spread blood like a brush (Ex. 12:21-22). John 19:29 and Hebrews 9:19 indicate that it grew in such a way that it could hold droplets of water that could be dashed from it. Perhaps most important, Psalm 51:7 indicates that *ezov* was used by the Israelites in cleaning, so it seems to have produced a soapy substance. The significance of *ezov* in the cleansing ceremonies seems to be its connection with cleaning.

Though a priest was involved in the ceremonies to be performed with these articles, they were not performed at the Tabernacle and not at the altar. Therefore, these ceremonies should not be understood to symbolize works performed by God. They should be understood to symbolize works to be performed by the person himself. As in all other

cleansing ceremonies, personal effort and the passing of time were necessary to remove the effects of sin from the person's life.

(2) The bird ceremony (14:5-7)

Verses 5-7. **5 And the priest shall command to kill one of the birds in a clay vessel over running water.**

6 He shall take the living bird with the cedar wood and the scarlet cochineal [yarn] and the hyssop, and he shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water.

7 And he shall splatter it on the one who is to be cleansed of *tsaraath* seven times. And he shall declare him clean, and he shall let the living bird go into the open field.

And the priest shall command to kill one of the birds in a clay vessel over running water. The priest was to begin the cleansing ceremonies by ordering that one of the birds be killed and its blood drained into a pottery bowl that had been filled with water from a spring or running stream. The water corresponded to washing in cleansing ceremonies from contact with unclean creatures (see comments on Lev. 11:25,28,32,40 in MESSAGE 14). The water was to be running water to represent washing by human effort, since people of that day went to springs or streams to bathe and wash their clothes. It showed that human effort was required to remove the effects and marks of sin from a person's life. The pottery bowl also added to the picture of human effort, because pottery bowls were formed by human work.

The bird that was killed also showed that the investment of a person's life was required to remove the effects of his sin. The bird was not killed at the altar but outside the camp, so killing the bird also should be understood to represent human effort to cleanse the effects of sin from the sinner's life. In the likeness of the altar offerings, the bird must have represented the person who was being cleansed (see comments on Lev. 1:4 in MESSAGE 1). Killing the bird and spilling its blood over a bowl of clean running water represented the sinner's giving or investing his life in the effort to remove the effects sin had left on

him. Killing the bird corresponded to "the blood of purifying," in cleansing ceremonies from uncleanness caused by childbirth, which also symbolized human effort to remove the effects of sin from the person's life (see comments on Lev. 12:4,5 in MESSAGE 15).

He shall take the living bird with the cedar wood and the scarlet cochineal [yarn] and the hyssop, and he shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. The cedar wood represented permanence, because cedar is almost totally resistant to rot. When a person worked hard to remove the effects of sin from his life, he would be permanently different and better than he was before. The *ezov* also represented the person's efforts to remove the effects of sin from his or her life, just as a person had to invest effort in washing clothes and bedding. The scarlet yarn represented life, because blood is red and life is in the blood (Lev. 17:14). It also symbolized that the person invested his life in the effort to remove sin's effects from his life. All of these symbols were to be dipped into the mingled blood and water in the clay pot. Thus, the blood, running water, pottery bowl, cedar wood, and scarlet yarn all showed that a forgiven sinner still needed to invest his life and effort into removing the effects of sin.

After the water in the bowl was touched by all of these symbols of human effort, the living bird was to be dipped into it. The living bird also represented the person's life. When it was dipped in the symbols of the person's efforts to remove sin's effects from his life, it represented the person's life that resulted from those efforts. What was done with the living bird showed the results of a person's investing his life and effort into removing the effects of sin from his life.

And he shall splatter it on the one who is to be cleansed of *tsaraath* seven times. And he shall declare him clean. The priest was then to splatter the mingled blood and water on the person being cleansed. The word translated "splatter" is the same as the word used in Leviticus 4:6,17; 5:9; 8:11,30 (see comments on Lev. 4:6 in MESSAGE 2). Splattering the blood and water on the person being cleansed showed that the whole ceremony applied

to and represented the person being cleansed, who in turn symbolized a person who was overcoming the effects that sin had left on his life. He was the one who was to invest his life and effort into removing sin's effects from his life. No one else could do it for him. The blood and water were splattered on the person seven times to show the completeness and earnestness he was to invest in the effort.

and he shall let the living bird go into the open field. Finally, the living bird was to be set free in the open field. The bird's release showed the results that would come from a person's investing his life into removing the effects of sin from his life. The result would be a free life, no longer burdened with the load of sin and able to live how God intended him to live. The person who invests his life into the effort to remove the effects of sin from his life will gain a life that is free and strong. That life will not waste away. It will last, and the person will find true freedom.

These ceremonies conducted outside the camp did not have the power in themselves to remove the effects of sin. They symbolized what the person had to do to remove those effects and the good results that would follow.

(3) The washing and time ceremonies (14:8-9)

Verse 8. And the one being cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And afterward he may come into the camp, though he shall dwell outside his tent [for] seven days.

Further understanding about what was required to remove the effects of sin from a person's life was then pictured in a different ceremony. The elements of this portion of the ceremonies were the same as those involved in cleansing from an unclean creature (see comments on Lev. 11:25-26,32,40 in MESSAGE 14) and from childbirth (see comments on Lev. 12:2-5). Those elements were washing and the passing of time. However, in this ceremony those actions were more elaborately done. They help to understand their

meaning more clearly.. First, the man was to wash his clothes, shave off all the hair of his body, and wash himself. This washing, like the previous ceremonies, represented a person's efforts to remove from his life all the ugly effects of sin. When he washed and shaved his whole body, he was allowed to return to the camp but not to his home. He had made progress toward cleansing, but he was not fully clean. This requirement showed that removing the effects of sin required more than a one-time effort. For seven days, he was to live in the camp before returning to his own tent. This requirement showed that it took time for a person to overcome the effects of sin on his or her life. Overcoming the effects of sin could not be accomplished instantaneously, no matter how much effort was put into it. Time is an important element in erasing the ugly marks of sin and in making a person free again. Both the amount of washing and amount of time involved in cleansing a person healed of *tsaraath* were increased over the ceremonies required for cleansing from contact with an unclean creature. Cleansing from unclean creatures required only the washing of the clothes and waiting until the evening (Lev. 11:25,27,28,31,39,40), while these ceremonies required washing the clothes, washing the person, shaving the whole body, and waiting for seven days. Most likely these additional requirements were given because *tsaraath* represented more serious involvement in sin than contact with unclean creatures did.

Verse 9. And on the seventh day, he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows. He shall shave off all his hair and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean.

On the seventh day, he was again to wash his clothes, shave off all the hair on his body, and wash himself. This second washing showed that the work to remove the effects of sin had to be a continuous effort. It could not be done all at one time. When these actions were completed, the healed person was allowed to return to his own home. His returning to a normal life showed that time and efforts would bring the desired results and that the effects of the person's sins would be removed. They were a challenge to people who had

fallen into sin and who had repented to persevere in their effort to overcome the results of their sins. In time after genuine effort, they would be clean and free again.

A careful examination of these ceremonies shows that applying the cleansing ceremonies to salvation is a grave error. Salvation is not accomplished by people's efforts. Neither does it take time to accomplish. It is accomplished instantaneously by the blood of Jesus and the grace of God. But, the removal of the effects of sin from the life of a believer require both effort on the part of the believer and the passing of time. Like the altar offerings, the cleansing ceremonies should be understood to be symbols of experiences of the covenant life, not the way into that life.

- b. The ceremonies at The Tabernacle (14:10-33)
 - (1) The normal procedure (14:10-20)
 - (a) Preparation for the ceremonies (14:10-11)

Verse 10. And on the eighth day, he must take two pristine male lambs and one pristine female lamb a year old and three-tenths [ephah] of fine flour [as] an homage-offering, mixed with oil, and one log of oil.

And on the eighth day, he must take two pristine male lambs. On the eighth day, a new phase of the cleansing ceremonies began. They took place at The Tabernacle and represented the divine side of overcoming the effects of sin. They showed that a believer could not remove the effects of sin from his life by his own efforts alone. Removing the effects also required the restoring work of God. In preparation for these ceremonies, the man was to secure two male lambs, which he was to recognize as appropriate for a rededication-offering (see comments on Lev. 1:10-13 in MESSAGE 1) and an offense-offering (see comments on Lev. 5:15 in MESSAGE 3). The rededication-offering symbolized the surrender of his life to God. The offense-offering symbolized making restitution for any wrong he had done.

and one pristine female lamb a year old\ . Also, he was to secure one female lamb, which he was to recognize as appropriate for a sin-offering (see comments on Lev. 4:32 in MESSAGE 2). The sin-offering represented repentance from his sins. Young animals were specified for each of these offerings, so that the offerings would not be unreasonably expensive for a person already damaged financially by the limitations placed on him because of his disease (see comments on Lev. 1:5 in MESSAGE 1).

and three-tenths [ephah] of fine flour [as] an homage-offering. In addition he was to secure three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, which meant wheat flour (see comments on Lev. 2:1, in MESSAGE 1 under the heading his offering may be [of] fine flour). Jehovah explained that the four was for an homage-offering. An homage-offering symbolized the person's surrender of his possessions to Jehovah (see comments on Lev. 2:1 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading offers an offering of homage to Jehovah). This requirement is the second mention of a definite amount of flour to be used in an homage-offering. In Leviticus 6:20, Jehovah told Moses that on the morning and again in the evening of the day of his anointing a priest was to offer an homage-offering consisting of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour. Those offerings were also to be the morning and evening continual offerings for that day (see comments on Lev. Lev. 6:20 in MESSAGE 6). Later, in Number 15:4-10, Jehovah gave the general rule for the amount of flour to be used in homage-offerings. The rule specified one-tenth of an ephah for an homage-offering to accompany a lamb rededication-offering. A tenth of an ephah amounted to either about three and a half pints or about three and a half quarts (see comments on Leviticus 5:11 in MESSAGE 2). The homage-offering for cleansing of a person healed of *tsaraath* was three times as much as the requirement for these regular homage-offerings, which would be either about 10 pints or about 10 quarts . The increased amount seems to have emphasized that a person who wanted to be free of the effects of sin needed to give special attention to surrendering his possessions to God. Love of possessions can be a big hindrance to a person's relationship to God. The extra amount of flour for the homage-offering

showed he was not going to let his possessions come ahead of God.

mixed with oil. The homage-offering of the person being cleansed was to be mixed with oil. The amount of oil to be used in the homage-offering is not stated. The general rule given in Numbers 15:4-10 was that the amount of oil to be mixed in an homage-offering to accompany a lamb sin-offering was one-fourth of a hin. A hin was a liquid measure slightly larger than five quarts. One-fourth of a hin would be about five cups or almost three pints. If the oil was also to be tripled in the cleansing ceremony, it would be three-fourths of a hin or either nearly nine pints or nearly four and a half quarts.

and one log of oil. Finally, he was to secure a log of oil. This purpose of this additional oil was to be made clear in verses 15-16 below. A “log” was a liquid measurement, equaling something less than a pint. Twelve logs equaled one hin, so a log was a little less than a pint.

Verse 11. And the priest cleansing him shall set the man being cleansed and these [offerings] before Jehovah at the entrance to The Tent of Meeting.

When the needed provisions had been secured, the priest was to lead the person being cleansed to The Tabernacle. He was to take with him the provisions he had secured.

(b) The offense-offering
(14:12-14)

Verse 12. And the priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it for an offense-offering along with the log of oil and wave them for a wave-offering at Jehovah’s face.

First, the priest was to take one of the male lambs for use as an offense-offering and the log of oil. He was to wave them for a wave-offering before Jehovah. A young lamb had been specified, so it was not too heavy to lift and wave over the altar. The wave ceremony had been introduced in connection with the slaughter-offering (see

comments on Lev. 7:28-36 in MESSAGE 9). It was used in this case as an indication that the person being cleansed offered the lamb and the oil to Jehovah and that Jehovah returned them to the priest to be used for his support. It showed that the forgiven offender was received back by Jehovah to be useful to Him.

Verse 13. And he shall kill the lamb in the place where they kill the sin-offering and the rededication-offering in The Holy Place, because like the sin-offering the homage-offering belongs to the priest. It is a holiness of holinesses.

Next, the priest was to take the male-lamb that had been waved over the altar and kill it. Interpreters have struggled much to explain the appropriateness of offering an offense-offering, which was accompanied by restitution, on this occasion. Some have thought that it was offered because the person being cleansed had not had opportunity to make restitution for harm he had done while excluded from the camp (see comments on Lev. 5:15 in MESSAGE 3). However, the requirement is not difficult to explain if we remember that the cleansing ceremonies were symbols. The offense-offering was not offered because of what the person being cleansed had done or had not done. It was offered for what he represented. He was a symbol of a sinner. The offense-offering was offered to teach that an Israelite who sought to free his life from the effects of sin should make restitution for the damage he had caused whenever he could.

“The Holy Place” meant the courtyard of The Tabernacle, where the altar for offering fire-offerings was located (see comments on Leviticus 10:17 in MESSAGE 13). “A holiness of holinesses” was a object of special holiness. It could be handled or eaten only by the priests. (see comments on Lev. 2:3 in MESSAGE 1 and on Lev. 6:16-17 in MESSAGE 5).

Verse 14. And the priest shall take from the blood of the offense-offering, and the priest shall put [it] on the tip of the right ear of the one being cleansed and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot.

The blood of this offense-offering was to be handled in a special way. The priest was to smear some of it on the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe of the person being cleansed. Evidently this action was in addition to the regular blood ceremony of the offense-offering, which was that the priest smeared some of the blood on the horns of the altar and poured out the remainder on its base (see comments on Lev. 4:30 in MESSAGE 7:7 in MESSAGE 7). The practice of smearing the blood on the right ear, right thumb, and right big toe was also used in the blood ceremony of the slaughter-offering of a priest (see comments on Lev. 8:24 in MESSAGE 10). In that offering, it did not replace the regular blood ceremony but was in addition to it. It must be assumed that the same is true here. The blood ceremony of the offense-offering symbolized that the life of a sinner was received again by Jehovah for service after he had corrected his actions (see comments on Lev. 4:5-7,25,30 in MESSAGE 2 and on Lev. 7:7 in MESSAGE 7). The smearing of the blood on the right ear, thumb, and big toe of the person being cleansed taught the same truth in a more specific way, showing that his best ear, best hand, and best foot were being received for service to Jehovah.

(c) The anointing (14:15-18)

Verses 15-16. **15 Then the priest shall take from the log of oil and pour [it] on the palm of his left hand.**

16 And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and splatter from the oil with his finger seven times at Jehovah's face.

Next, the priest was to conduct a special anointing ceremony. The word "anointing" is not used in the text, and it is important to carefully distinguish this anointing ceremony from the anointing of priests (see comments on 8:12-13 in MESSAGE 10). Yet, in many respects, this ceremony was similar to the anointing of the priests, and "anointing" seems to be the only word appropriate to describe it. The priest was to take the log of oil and pour some it into the palm of his left hand. This action was necessary because the oil could not be thumped directly from the small container, which likely was a horn or a bottle with a

small opening at the top. He could, however, thump the oil from the palm of his hand. With a finger of his right hand, he was to splatter some of the oil seven times before the entrance to The Tabernacle, which represented the presence of Jehovah (see comments on Lev. 4:6,17 in MESSAGE 2). This action symbolized that the oil with which the person was about to be anointed belonged to Jehovah and symbolized His presence. The splattering of the oil on the person being cleansed showed that Jehovah's presence was on the person to remove the effects of sin. Splattering the oil seven times showed the completeness with which Jehovah removed the effects of sin from the life of a repentant sinner and received him for service. Later, oil came to represent the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, which is a refinement of the idea here. But, up to this time, nowhere in the Scripture had the Spirit been connected with oil.

Verse 17. **And the priest shall put from the oil that remains in his hand on the tip of the right ear of the one being cleansed and on the right thumb of his hand and on the big toe of his right foot over the blood of the offense-offering.**

Then the priest was to smear some of the oil that remained in his left hand on the same spots where the blood of the offense-offering had just been smeared. The meaning was Jehovah removed the effects of sin from the best of the person's life and would use them in His service.

Verse 18. **And the rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of the one being cleansed, and the priest shall cover over him at Jehovah's face.**

The remainder of the oil in the priest's hand probably means the oil in the container the priest was holding. He was to pour it on the head of the man being cleansed. This part of the ceremony was identical to the anointing of a priest, except that the special mixture of holy oil that was used in anointing a priest was not used in the cleansing ceremony (see Ex. 30:22-33). The anointing completed the symbolism that the effects of sin were removed from the forgiven sinner's life and he was set apart to serve Jehovah. The anointing also brought covering to the sinner. When he was set

apart to belong to Jehovah, he was covered from the damage brought on him by his sins (see comments on Lev. 1:4 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading to cover over him).

- (d) The sin-offering, rededication-offering, and homage-offering (14:19-20)

Verses 19-20. **19 And the priest shall offer the sin-offering and cover over him who is being cleansed from his uncleanness. And afterward he shall kill the rededication-offering.**

20 And the priest shall offer the rededication offering and the homage-offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall cover over him, and he shall be clean.

Then the priest was to offer the three other offerings. The sin-offering showed that a sinner needs to repent of any sins that come into his life after he surrenders his life to God. Repeated repentance is necessary to fully remove the effects that sins have left on a person's life. The rededication-offering showed that a sinner needs to totally surrender his life to God so God can help him remove the effects of sin from his life. The homage-offering shows that a sinner also needs to surrender all his possessions to Jehovah. Attraction for physical possessions can be a powerful source of temptation to sin. Surrendering one's possessions to God is a powerful antidote to that temptation and an important ingredient in removing the effects of sin from a person's life. All these commitments together would bring removal of the effects of sin from the life of a believer

The oil of the anointing, the sin-offering, the rededication-offering, and the homage-offering are all said to cover over the sinner to protect him from the damage caused by his sins. Since all of these elements brought covering, it can be seen clearly that these ceremonies did not symbolize salvation, which occurs once for all instantly upon surrendering to Jesus. However, many elements must combine together to remove the effects that sin had left on his life.

When the healed person had completed all the ceremonies representing these spiritual truths,

he was clean. These elaborate ceremonies showed that sin in the life of a believer is not a small problem and that overcoming its effects is not easy. However, effort on the part of the sinner plus the passing of time plus the grace and power of God can remove the effects of sin, change the person's life, and restore the person to God's fellowship and to a useful and productive life.

- c. The procedure for a poor person (14:21-32)

Verses 21-23. **21 And if he is poor and cannot afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for an offense-offering to be waved to cover over him and a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for an homage-offering and a log of oil.**

22 And two turtle doves or two young pigeons, as he can afford. One shall be a sin-offering, and the other a rededication-offering.

23 And he shall bring them on the eighth day for his cleansing to the priest at the entrance of The Tent of Meeting at Jehovah's face.

In case a person who had been healed of *tsaraath* was not able to afford all the animals required by the normal procedure for his cleansing, a substitute procedure was provided that would make the ceremonies within the financial capability of virtually any person. That provision was in keeping with earlier provisions for less expensive offerings when a person could not afford the more expensive forms. Jehovah was not primarily interested in how wealthy a person was but in how sincere his heart was (see comments on Lev. 1:10,14 concerning less expensive forms of the rededication-offering; on Lev. 3:6-7,12 in MESSAGE 1 concerning less expensive forms of the slaughter-offering and on Lev. 5:7,11 in MESSAGE 2 concerning less expensive forms of the sin-offering).

Instead of two male lambs and one female lamb, the poor person who was healed could offer one male lamb for an offense-offering and two birds, one for a sin-offering and the other for a rededication-offering. Also instead of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour (v. 10), the poor person could offer for his homage offering one-tenth of an

ephah of fine flour. The flour was still to be mingled with oil (presumably one-fourth hin (see Num. 15:4-5).

No substitute was made for the male lamb used for an offense offering, because no less expensive form of that offering was allowed (see comments on Lev. 5:15 in MESSAGE 3). The offense-offering represented a desire to make

restitution for harm done. Restitution cannot be done in an inexpensive manner.

The significance of the less expensive offerings was exactly the same as that of the more expensive offerings. The important element was sincerity in the person's heart, not the cost of the offering, if the lesser offerings were all the person could afford.

Application

When a Christian sins, bad effects are left on his life. It takes three actions to remove those effects: his own effort, the passing of time, and the grace and power of God. The marks of sin will not automatically disappear from him. The forgiven sinner must work at removing the effects of his sin, with patience and faith. He must invest energy in living a different life, and gradually his inner attitudes and his outward appearance will change. Even with much effort, the marks of sin will not disappear over night. But, in time, as he works to transform his actions, his life will no longer reflect the likeness of the world but the likeness of God. The marks of sin will be erased and replaced with the likeness of God.

However, the forgiven sinner will need even more. As hard as a forgiven sinner works to change his actions and his appearance, he cannot succeed in changing completely by his own efforts alone. He also needs God's grace and power. How much help he receives from God will depend on how much he leans on God for assistance. He needs to keep rededicating His life to God. He needs to keep asking forgiveness of every failure. He needs to seek to make restitution for every harm he has done. He needs to surrender his possession to God, so his money and property will not control him, but God will. As he makes those steps of surrender and obedience, God will respond by working in his life to help him be the new person he needs to be. Removing the effects of sin from a person's life is a cooperative effort between the person and God. Neither can change the way the person thinks and lives alone. It takes God and the person working together. As the person and God work together, coarseness will diminish and righteousness will increase in the person's life. His thinking, his actions, and his appearance will change. The longer and the further he stays away from sin and the more he stays near to God, the more like God he will become.